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EDITORS' TABLE.

EDITORS: A. S. PACKARD, JR., AND E. D. COPE.

—— The metric system is extensively used in this country, but not yet so generally as would seem to be desirable. While its introduction into scientific work is quite general, its use in mechanics and manufactures makes slow progress. This is natural, but we believe that the merits of the system will become so obvious as ultimately to command the support of all who use measures of any kind. It is evident that such a radical change can only be made slowly, and be introduced under special circumstances, as, for instance, in the commencement of new manufacturing or engineering enterprises. Old institutions with extensive apparatus, would be involved in expense in changing their scales, and in difficulty in instructing their employés. But we cannot on this account endorse the opposition which has been displayed in some quarters. The fact that it may cost a given firm of manufacturing machinists so many thousand dollars to alter their measuring tools, does not justify those persons in resisting the general introduction of the system. The objection now most dwelt on, that the metre is not exactly what it professes to be, has, in our judgment, little bearing on the present state of the case. What the world wants, and sooner or later will have, is a uniform decimal system of weights and measures. This it has in the metric system, and its adoption has now proceeded so far that it is useless to think of proposing or creating another to take its place.

We hope that the time is near at hand when a uniform decimal system of coinage will be adopted by civilized governments. It will be much more readily introduced into common use than the changes contemplated by the metric system.

—— It has been demonstrated beyond all doubt that the Permanent Exhibition of Philadelphia can pay its running expenses. Even in its present inchoate condition it supplies a need, and is popular with a large class of citizens. But it remains to put into execution the classified museum scheme which was adopted two years ago, and before this is done provision must be made for necessary repairs to the roof and floor of the building. The former requires attention, but the condition of the floor is more serious. It is to be hoped that the subscription now on foot in this city to raise a fund to secure these repairs, will be successful. Then it will be seen whether the Board of Directors will rise to the importance of the work cut out by the Council of Education, and will really grant to that body the privilege of carrying out the programme they have presented. Unless this is fully and frankly done, the Board of Directors may rest assured that their labors, which have been neither few nor light, will have been wasted, and that the Exposition will be a failure. The Council of Education is composed of capable men, and such as will not be found to repeat their past work unless their relations to the Exposition are placed on a permanent and satisfactory basis.

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RECENT LITERATURE.

THE TARSUS AND CARPUS OF BIRDS.[1]—In his first paper, Prof. Morse gives the results of his examination of the embryos of various North American birds, with reference to the primitive constitution of their tarsus and carpus. In the former he finds three bones, *tibiale*, *fibulare* and *centrale*. The first two unite into an hourglass-shaped bone such as exists among Dinosauria, the *astragalo-calcaneum*, while the last forms the cap for the metatarsals, contributing to the adult tarsometatarse. In the carpus Prof. Morse finds four bones (rarely five), of which two become united with the ulno-radius, and two or three with the metacarpals. He then introduces the description of a fourth tarsal bone found by Prof. Wyman in the "blue heron," and mentioned by him in a letter. Prof. Morse concludes that this element is the intermedium of Gegenbaur somewhat out of place. In his quarto memoir, the author further investigates this fourth tarsal and its homologues. His studies having been directed to the lower birds, as penguins, auks, petrels, etc., he finds the ascending bone partly occupying the position of the intermedium in several of them. He finds that it early unites with the tibiale and fibulare, forming a temporary *astragalo-calcaneum*, which thereafter unites with the tibia. He is thus able to homologize the ascending process of the *astragalo-calcaneum* of *Ornithotarsus* and *Lælaps* with the intermedium. In the course of his examinations of the manus of the sea pigeon, Prof. Morse found curious apical expansions of the distal phalanges.

We have been much interested in this essay, and commend it as a good illustration of the meaning of the term *monograph*.

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[1] *The Tarsus and Carpus of Birds.* By E. S. MORSE, Ph.D. Annals Lyceum New York, 1872.

The Identity of the Ascending Process of the Astragalus in Birds with the Intermedium. By E. S. MORSE, Ph.D. Anniv. Mem. Boston Soc. N. History. 1880. 4to.